

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Cover Memorandum accompanying the August 2, 2007 filing of Revised Final Rule Adoption by the Division of Family and Children's Services for Independent Living.

Listed below is revised policy for Independent Living for the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services. This revised policy has been added to the Volume IV policy manual, Section D.

1. Proposed Rule:

Some services are provided through a contractual agreement to include Life Skills Training, Youth Opportunity Training, Youth Conferences, and other services deemed appropriate.

Current Rule:

Some services are provided through a contractual agreement to include Life Skills Training, Retreats, Youth Conferences, and other services deemed necessary.

2. Proposed Rule:

County Conference Stipend: A \$25.00 stipend can be earned by a youth, age 14 years or older, for attending and participating in his/her Foster Care Review County Conference. If the youth resides outside a 50-mile radius from the location of the Conference, the COS shall offer the youth the opportunity to attend the Conference by telephone to receive the stipend. The Foster Care Reviewer will document in the conference summation the youth's participation during the County Conference. The COR Worker will submit the stipend payment through MACWIS under State Funds. This stipend will be requested within ten (10) days of the County Conference.

Current Rule:

None

3. Proposed Rule:

PERSONAL DOCUMENTS TO BE GIVEN TO A YOUTH UPON DISCHARGE FROM CUSTODY

Youth are released from the agency's custody due to various reasons, including but not limited to the fact youth has reached his/her majority age. Whatever the reason for leaving custody, the Worker shall ensure that the youth receives, at no cost, his/her original:

1. Birth Certificate
2. Social Security Card

Other documents supplied, at no cost, to the youth upon discharge from custody include:

1. Educational documents
2. Medical history/information
3. Any life books compiled during youths stay in custody
4. Copy of any court orders
5. Photographs

On the narrative screen in MACWIS, the Worker shall list all documents given to the youth upon discharge from custody.

Current Rule:

None

4. Proposed Rule:

CUSTODY BEYOND AGE 20

Under jurisdiction by the Youth Court, the agency's custody of a youth ends at age 20. If the COR can document unmitigated circumstances that constitute the need to continue custody past age 20, they may petition the Chancery Court for continued custody. This petition must be filed prior to the youth's 20th birthday. MACWIS will send the COR Worker a tickler 60 days prior to the youth's 20th birthday alerting the Worker of pending legal action.

Current Rule:

None

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

A. INTRODUCTION

Mission Statement-

To provide youth and young adults in care with an array of services and resources to assist and guide them in making a successful transition to becoming independent adults

The Independent Living Program (ILP) helps adolescents acquire basic life skills in their progress toward self-sufficiency. Youth are eligible for Independent Living Services based on the following criteria:


1. Youth in care ages 14 until their 21st birthday are eligible for all Independent Living Services except for criteria placed on the Educational and Training Voucher program;
2. Youth who leave custody ages 18 to their 21st birthday are eligible for Aftercare services until their 21st birthday;
3. Youth who enroll in post-secondary educational and vocational programs may be eligible based on the criteria detailed in the **Educational and Training Voucher (ETV) Program** section.

All youth must have the opportunity to participate in independent living preparations, without regard to the youth's permanent plan. Refusal by the youth to participate is **not** a valid reason for non-participation. Independent Living Services are **mandatory** and not optional for all youth in care who are at least 14 years old or less than 21 years old. All youth in care are eligible and appropriate to receive Independent Living Services, based on the child's best interest. Some services are provided through a contractual agreement to include Life Skills Training, Youth Opportunity Training, Youth Conferences, and other services deemed appropriate. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian youth are eligible for Independent Living Services based on the same criteria for MDHS youth in care.


B. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WORKER

1. The County of Responsibility (COR) Worker **must** complete an Individual Service Plan (ISP) on all youth in care. When the youth reaches his/her 14th birthday, an Independent Living Plan **must** be completed ☐ in MACWIS. This Independent Living Plan must include a description of all programs and services that will help the youth prepare for transition from foster care to independent living. When the youth reaches his/her 16th birthday, an ISP **must** include a documented Transitional Living Plan (TLP) based on an assessment of the

youth's needs. The COR Worker and the Youth shall be involved in the development of the ISP, Independent Living Plan, and the TLP.

2. The COR Worker will provide recommendations to the Youth Court Judge, during Review Hearings, that identify specific services being provided and services needed to help the youth transition from foster care to living independently.
3. The COR Worker and the COS Worker **must** inform the youth of all Independent Living activities and arrange for participation, including transportation. The transportation plan must include who will transport the youth to all of the Independent Living activities. (The transporter may be a Family Protection Worker/Specialist, Area Social Work Supervisor, Resource Parent, Group Home Staff, Homemaker, Child Protection Service Worker, Volunteer/Mentor, Case Aide, Independent Living Specialist, or any designated staff.)
4. The COR Worker **must** input  into MACWIS the data (life skills modules) sent from the Independent Living Specialist, which may include the Worker's professional knowledge of the youth's comprehension of life skills.
5. The COS Worker, if applicable, is responsible for carrying out the plan that is established in the youth's ISP.
6. The COR Worker must supply the child/youth with their most recent available health and education records, at no cost, when the child/youth leaves custody.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AREA SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR (ASWS)

The COR Supervisor is responsible for reviewing and approving the youth's Individual Service Plan and Transitional Living Plan  in MACWIS. This includes all submissions for approval under the Independent Living Plan icon.

D. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Each youth in care of the agency has is mandated to participate in all Independent Living Services based on the Independent Living Program eligibility criteria. These services include:

1. **Life Skills Training Groups:** The skills training is based on a nationally recognized curriculum approved by the agency. Skills training are based on assessments, personal contact, the Independent Living Plan and the Transitional

Living Plan. The curriculum contains the following components: Community Resources and Transportation, Communication Skills and Social Development, Employment, Money Management, Decision Making and Study Skills, Housing, Daily Living Skills, Self-Care, and Youth Law issues. These groups are scheduled monthly, by the Independent Living Specialists (contractor), in identified locations, throughout the state.

2. **Youth Opportunity Trainings**, formerly known as youth retreats, are held throughout the state. Some of these are open to youth ages 14-15, while others are open to youth ages 16 to their 21st birthday. Overnight Youth Opportunity Trainings are held each year covering all geographical areas of the state. The purpose of these trainings is to enhance the life skills learned in the scheduled skills groups discussed under the Life-Skills Training Groups section. Additional life skills include, but are not limited to; team-building, leadership development, positive self expression, socialization, self-esteem, and positive values. The COR Worker will submit an application for approval ☐ in MACWIS for the youth to attend the scheduled Youth Opportunity Training.
3. **Statewide Youth Conferences** are held annually to benefit youth from ages 16-21st birthday. The purpose of the Youth Conferences is to reinforce the life skills presented through out the year at the scheduled life skills training groups and Youth Opportunity Trainings. Youth conferences include various life skill building activities and motivational speakers. The COR Worker will submit an application for approval ☐ in MACWIS for the youth to attend the annual youth conference. The COR Worker shall also make a request for the Youth Conference Allowance (\$30.00), and the Youth Conference Clothing Allowance (\$200.00) ☐ in MACWIS.
4. **Stipends** are paid for youth's accomplishments and assistance. Stipends are discussed under **Stipend Requirements and How to Apply**.
5. **Transitional Independent Living Placements** are available to youth ages 18 to their 21st birthday, upon approval from the SAILS Advisory Board. Youth 17 years of age who have obtained a high school diploma, General Education Diploma (GED), or Certificate of Completion will also be considered for placement.
6. **Newsletter** distribution that contains information about the Independent Living Program is provided periodically to youth statewide. Submissions from the youth may be included in the newsletter.
7. **Handbook for Youth in Care** is available to all youth in the custody of the MDHS, Division of Family and Children's Services, who attain the age of fourteen (14) or older when entering custody. The Handbook highlights programs, services, brochures, and guideline information for the youth while in care. This Handbook is available through the county where the youth resides and in

conjunction with the Independent Living Specialist (contractor) upon the youth attending their first Life Skills group session.

8. **Education and Training Voucher Program** helps youth make the transition to self-sufficiency and to help youth receive the education, training and services necessary to obtain employment. Refer to the Educational and Training Voucher section for a complete discussion of this program.
9. **SAILS Advisory Board** (Strategies for Accessing Independent Living Services) is discussed under **Advisory Boards**.
10. **HOPE Forum** (Help Ourselves Prosper Equally) is discussed under **Advisory Boards**.
11. **Aftercare Services** are available to youth who leave care on or after their 18th birthday. Refer to the Aftercare Services section for a complete discussion of this service.
12. **Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Mississippi** mentoring program is available to youth in care ages 14-16, in selected areas.

E. ADVISORY BOARDS

SAILS Advisory Board (Strategies for Achieving Independent Living Services) is an advisory board composed of the State Independent Living Coordinator, MDHS Staff members from each of the regions in the State, the contracted Program Director, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians representatives, stakeholders, and youth leaders. The board meets monthly to help in the decision making for recommendations of the Independent Living Program services.

HOPE Forum (Help Ourselves Prosper Equally) is a youth advisory group, which consists of members who are participating in the Independent Living Program. Meetings are held at least once a quarter for the youth to discuss improvements or challenges with the Independent Living Program.

F. STIPEND REQUIREMENTS AND HOW TO APPLY

The Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 (PL 106-169) provides the following stipends:

1. **Pre-Assessment Stipend (Initial):** A \$25.00 stipend is available to all youth who complete a Life Skills Pre-Assessment form. The Independent Living Specialist will document the completion of the pre-assessment and will notify the COR Worker that it has been completed by the youth. The Worker will submit the

stipend request to the Independent Living Coordinator ☐ through MACWIS under State Funds.

2. **Post-Assessment Stipend (Final):** A **\$25.00** stipend is available to all youth who participate in the Independent Living Program and complete a Post-Assessment. The Independent Living Specialist will document the completion of the post-assessment and will notify the COR Worker that it has been completed by the youth. The Worker will submit the request to the Independent Living Coordinator ☐ through MACWIS under State Funds.
3. **Life Skills Training Group Stipend:** A **\$20.00** stipend can be earned for the completion of ten (10) Skills Hours. These skills groups are available through the Independent Living Specialist. The Specialist will document earned skills hours and will notify the COR Worker that the youth has accumulated the required hours. The Worker will submit the request to the Independent Living Coordinator ☐ through MACWIS under State Funds. Youth will receive hour for hour credit for skills group participation. This stipend will be issued directly to the youth.
4. **Youth Opportunity Training Stipend:** A **\$20.00** stipend can be earned for attending a Youth Opportunity Training. These trainings are planned through the Independent Living Specialist. The Specialist will document satisfactory participation in the training and will notify the COR Worker. The Worker will submit the request ☐ through MACWIS under State Funds. This stipend will be issued directly to the youth.
5. **Youth Conference Stipend:** A youth will receive a **\$30** cash stipend for successful completion of participation in the annual conference. The Independent Living Program's private contractor will pay this stipend to the youth at the completion of the conference. (Youth are eligible to receive a **\$30.00** Youth Conference Allowance and a **\$200.00** Youth Conference Clothing Allowance prior to attending the Youth Conference. The stipends shall be requested ☐ in MACWIS by the COR Worker.)
6. **Newsletter Stipend:** A **\$15.00** stipend is available to youth who submit an article, poem or other creative writing, as well as a letter to the editor, or an editorial to the State Independent Living Coordinator for consideration for publication in any MDHS publication. The youth may send the submission directly to the State Independent Living Coordinator, MDHS Placement Unit, the COR Worker or the COS Worker who may submit the writing for the youth. The COR Worker will request the stipend ☐ in MACWIS and, upon approval, will issue the check directly to the youth.
7. **Senior Year Stipend:** A **\$350.00** stipend is available to help defray senior/final year expenses for youth receiving a diploma, GED or a Certificate of Attendance at the close of the school/program year in which the stipend is requested. The

youth shall also be a participant in Independent Living Program activities. This stipend should be requested during the youth's senior year, ☐ in MACWIS, by the COR Worker under State Funds. This stipend must be issued to the vendor(s). A re-imbursement payment may be issued to an individual/party, including the youth, in the event a purchase was made, and proof of payment was rendered. An itemized receipt must be presented to the COR bookkeeper before a check can be issued. A statement from the youth's school verifying enrollment, as a senior/final year with anticipated graduation/completion being that same academic/program year, must be filed in the paper case record in the county. Typical senior/final year expenses include, but not limited to, pictures, invitations, cap and gown, prom attire, senior trip expenses. All purchases must be receipted and all receipts kept in the COR office.

8. **High School Graduation Stipend:** A **\$200.00** Graduation Stipend is available to all youth in custody who receive a high school diploma. A copy of the diploma must be filed in the paper case record in the COR office. This stipend can be accessed ☐ from the appropriate MACWIS screen. This one-time stipend should be issued to the youth as a graduation gift to spend as the youth wishes. A signed receipt from the youth must be sent to the bookkeeper in the COR.
9. **GED (General Education Diploma)/Certificate of Attendance Stipend:** A **\$150.00** Stipend is available to all youth in custody who receive a Certificate of Attendance, or pass the GED (General Equivalency Diploma). A copy of the certificate or diploma must be filed in the paper case record in the COR office. This stipend can be accessed ☐ from the appropriate MACWIS screen. This one time stipend should be issued to the youth as a gift to spend as the youth wishes. A signed receipt from the youth must be sent to the bookkeeper in the COR.
10. **College Bound Stipend:** A **\$600.00** College Bound Stipend is available to youth in care who plan to attend a post-secondary education program. This stipend is requested ☐ through the appropriate MACWIS screens after the COR Worker receives verification that the youth has been accepted in a post-educational program. This stipend must be issued to the vendor(s). A reimbursement payment may be issued to an individual/party including the youth in the event a purchase was made, and proof of payment was rendered. An itemized receipt must be given to the COR bookkeeper before a check can be issued. All purchases must be receipted and all receipts kept in the COR office. Allowable purchases are items needed to furnish a residence (on or off campus) such as, but not limited to: bedspread, curtains, rugs, refrigerator, microwave, trunk, bookcase, small appliances, computer, furniture items, and books/resource materials.
11. **College Graduation Stipend:** A **\$300.00** stipend is available for youth until their 21st birthday who complete a two-year community college, four-year college/university or full completion of a vocational program. Upon proof of graduation, this one-time stipend should be requested ☐ in MACWIS by the COR Worker and issued to the youth to spend as the youth wishes. A signed receipt from the youth must be given to the bookkeeper in the COR.

12. **Start-Up Stipend:** A \$1000.00 Start-Up Stipend is available to youth who leave care after turning age sixteen (16) and who have participated in the available Independent Living Program activities. The youth must have been in care for a minimum of six (6) months. This stipend may be requested during the six months prior to release from custody and up to the six months following release from custody. Youth who have been approved for the Independent Living Placement, shall have the option to utilize this one-time stipend upon leaving custody. Documentation must be ☐ entered in MACWIS to include the release from custody date or the anticipated date. This stipend must be issued directly to the vendor(s). A re-imbursement payment may be issued to an individual/party including the youth in the event a purchase was made and proof of payment was rendered. An itemized receipt must be given to the COR bookkeeper before a check can be issued. All purchases must be receipted and all receipts kept in the COR office. Acceptable purchases may include any items associated with the establishment of a home such as, but not limited to; dishes, cooking utensils, appliances, linens, furniture, cleaning supplies, curtains, and rugs. The COR Worker should request this one-time stipend through the appropriate MACWIS screens. A youth released from custody at age 17 or older and already has a job may use a portion of this stipend to assist in the purchase or repair of a vehicle, if the vehicle is needed in the youth's job and as long as the youth already has the minimal essential items needed to live independently. This youth must show proof of having a driver's license and State required liability insurance.
13. **Youth Trainer Stipend:** A \$20 stipend is available to youth for assisting in various training activities. The State Independent Living Coordinator, based on recommendations from the SAILS Advisory Board, will select youth.
14. **Aftercare Survey Stipend:** A \$25 stipend is available to youth upon completion and return of an Aftercare Survey. This stipend will be paid by the contractor.
15. **Personal Enhancement Stipend:** A discretionary stipend may be awarded to a youth in custody, who has attained age 14, based on documented needs and contingent upon available funds. *This stipend is paid when all other sources of financial assistance have been explored such as youth's own money, county, regional, and state funds.* The COR Worker must make a request for this stipend ☐ through MACWIS for approval by the State Independent Living Coordinator. A well-documented justification explaining the youth's needs must accompany the request. This stipend cannot exceed \$1,000 and must be paid to the vendor(s). A re-imbursement payment may be issued to an individual/party including the youth in the event a purchase was made and proof of payment was rendered. An itemized receipt must be given to the COR bookkeeper before a check can be issued. The youth must have participated in the ILP. Items that can be purchased with this fund include, but are not limited to; drivers education, summer school, correspondence courses, tutors, test fees, medical/dental procedures not covered under insurance or Medicaid, special trips/camps, or other extra-curricular school activities. The agency may pay for costs such as a youth's car insurance or care repairs that are reasonable and necessary for the youth to attend classes or to become independent.

- 16. County Conference Stipend:** A \$25.00 stipend can be earned by a youth, age 14 years or older, for attending and participating in his/her Foster Care Review County Conference. If the youth resides outside a 50-mile radius from the location of the Conference, the COS shall offer the youth the opportunity to attend the Conference by telephone to receive the stipend. The Foster Care Reviewer will document in the conference summation the youth's participation during the County Conference. The COR Worker will submit the stipend payment ☐ through MACWIS under State Funds. This stipend will be requested within ten (10) days of the County Conference.

*Youth from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians are eligible for the above listed stipends. The youth reside in the following counties in Mississippi: Attala, Jones, Kemper, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Winston. A Worker who receives a stipend request from a Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians youth must complete a Case Management service ☐ in MACWIS, requesting the appropriate support service for the particular stipend. This request can be entered from the county location in which the youth resides.

F. DRIVERS LICENSE FOR YOUTH IN CARE

A resource parent, a group home administrator who has responsibility of the youth in care, a court-appointed guardian, an employer of the youth or, if there is no guardian or employer, any other responsible person who is willing to assume the financial obligation (liability) imposed under Miss. Code 63-1-25, may choose to sign the application for a youth, unless restricted by a court order, who is at least age 16, to obtain a driver's license.

All drivers are required to be covered by liability insurance. However, if a car accident is caused because the youth-in-care was negligent or engaged in willful misconduct, and the damages suffered by passengers in his vehicle or in another vehicle are higher than the policy limits on the insurance coverage, the resource parent or other adult who signed the driver's license application will be liable for whatever expenses the liability insurance does not pay. The young driver's negligence or willful misconduct is imputed to the adult who signed the young person's application for a license without any need to prove that the adult was negligent in supervising the youth in care. This is the obligation (potential liability) imposed under Miss. Code 63-1-25.

A youth who is seventeen (17) years of age or older may sign a license application without an adult's signature but may not drive until he is covered by liability insurance.

G. MOTOR VEHICLES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

Resource Parents or any other responsible adult has the freedom to purchase a motor vehicle for a youth in custody unless restricted by a court order. The county staff shall be informed of the plan to purchase a vehicle prior to the purchase of the vehicle. That plan must be well documented ☐ in MACWIS under the Transitional Living Plan; Transportation Radio Button. Youth in care may purchase a vehicle with their own funds if they have a valid driver's license, proof of liability insurance, and income to maintain the vehicle.

H. TRANSITIONAL LIVING PLAN

Youth in care, age 16 and older shall have a Transitional Living Plan in addition to the Individual Service Plan. A Transitional Living Plan is defined as a plan documenting how a youth will move from State's custody into other programs or to self-sufficiency. The COR Worker shall complete and identify, ☐ on the IL Plan/TL Plan screen in MACWIS, the youth's post-custody living arrangement, means of support, educational/vocational, food & clothing, health, transportation and mentor/resource family. The Transitional Living Plan shall be updated and modified as needed, each time the youth's ISP is reviewed and updated.

Six (6) months prior to the anticipated release of custody date, the Independent Living Specialist (contractor) shall be notified to assist the youth in preparing for their independence. As part of the Exit Interview form and for future reference, the Independent Living Specialist (contractor) will secure from the youth information on where they can be reached upon leaving custody.

I. INDEPENDENT LIVING PLACEMENTS

An **Independent Living Placement** is defined as placement in an apartment, house, or rooming house with supervision from a licensed placement agency. A youth who has attained age 18, meets the requirements of the Responsibilities of the Youth section, and is in the custody of the agency will be considered for placement through an agency licensed for independent living placements. A youth who has attained age 17, in addition, must obtain a high school diploma, certificate of attendance or GED. The youth's Worker, Supervisor, and Independent Living Specialist must recommend this placement to the SAILS Advisory Board before final approval by the Independent Living Coordinator. COR and COS workers shall collaborate services to support placement.

Placement Requirements;

1. Shall be located to provide reasonably convenient access to school, place of employment, and other essential services;
2. Shall comply with all fire, sanitation, and safety regulations as determined by MDHS Licensure Standards as set for Child Placing Agencies;
3. Shall be affordable based on the youth's established budget;
4. All request for Independent Living placements shall be presented to the Division of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) SAILS Advisory Board for consideration;
5. The State Independent Living Coordinator, with the recommendations of the SAILS Advisory Board, approves all Independent Living placements;
6. Shall have provisions to allow for a roommate if the conditions under **Responsibilities of the Youth** are followed.

Role of the Child Placing Agency;

1. Shall sign the lease or rental agreement;
2. Shall provide a contractual agreement of responsibilities for the youth to sign. This agreement shall be updated as circumstances such as changes in the level of income or work schedule changes;
3. Shall accept the Board Payment and disseminate the funds to the landlord for rent and any surplus funds to the youth;
4. Shall make on-site visits as directed by the child placing agency's policy and in accordance with MDHS, Division of Family and Children's Services' licensing standards for child placing agencies;

Responsibilities of the Youth;

1. Shall be employed with sufficient income to meet the needs of their budget;
2. Shall be an active participant and maintain involvement in the Independent Living Program;
3. Shall be capable of creating a budget based on income and living within the created budget;
4. Shall have a plan to cover the initial cost of placement;
5. Shall be willing to sign and comply with a contract from the licensed placing agency, delineating specific rules and requirements. If the contract is not satisfactorily met, the youth must leave the Independent Living Placement Program;
6. Shall be willing to allow planned and unplanned visits to the residence by the Worker, the Specialist, the Placement Agency, and other Department staff as deemed necessary

If the youth wishes to live with a roommate(s), the roommate(s) shall:

- a. be a sibling or another youth who is also in the agency's custody;
- b. be of the same sex, if not biological siblings, and have separate bedrooms;

- c. be presented to the SAILS Advisory Board for approval if the roommate is not in the custody of the agency. The SAILS Advisory Board will give consideration of the requests on a case-by-case basis;
- d. be approved for Independent Living placements;

Responsibilities of the Worker;

1. Shall assist youth in conjunction with the Independent Living Specialist in selecting appropriate housing, avoiding conflict of interest regarding rental property;
2. Shall locate and approve a mentor for the youth;
3. Shall be available to meet with the SAILS Advisory Board members and the child placing agency staff;
4. Shall enter the appropriate placement information by selecting Supervised Independent Living on the ☐ appropriate MACWIS screen after placement has been confirmed.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor;

1. Shall attend SAILS Advisory Board meetings in the event the Worker or appointee to the SAILS Advisory Board is unavailable to attend;
2. Shall review for approval appropriate placement information in MACWIS;
3. Shall review for approval the release of the appropriate funds for Independent Living Support Services and Independent Living Placement Services

Responsibilities of the Independent Living Specialists (contractor);

1. Shall assist youth in conjunction with the agency's Worker in selecting appropriate housing, avoiding conflict of interest regarding rental property;
2. Shall meet with the youth every two weeks and assist in the maintenance of the youth's budget;
3. Shall compile monthly reports to be presented at the monthly SAILS Advisory Board meeting outlining the youth's previous month's activities;
4. Shall report problems or potential problems to the agency Worker.

J. EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM


The ETV Program is a federal program that provides supplemental resources to meet the *cost of attendance* in post-secondary educational and vocational programs, as defined in the Higher Education Act of 1965, for all youth aging out of custody. This program makes vouchers of up to \$5,000 per year available to eligible youth attending post-secondary education.

The following individuals will be considered for Educational and Training Vouchers:

1. Youth currently in custody of the agency;
2. Youth who have left custody because they attained 16 years of age, and have not yet attained 21 years of age; They must have been in custody for at least six(6) months;
3. Youth who were adopted at age 16 and have not yet attained 21 years of age;
4. Youth who graduate high school, receive a GED, or a certificate of attendance;
5. Youth who have participated in the ETV Program prior to their 21st birthday in order to continue receiving ETV funds until their 23rd birthday;
6. Youth who first apply for and have received confirmation from the institution through an award letter to include the Pell Grant, MTAG, scholarships, or other grants, if applicable. The Independent Living Specialist will provide assistance to the agency's Worker to secure necessary documentation.

The funds may be applied for annually during each federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30). The limited amount of \$5,000, per youth, must be utilized during the fiscal year. The application should be made using the following criteria:

1. Enrolled in an institution of higher education, as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965:
 - a. Awards a Bachelor's Degree or is not less than a two-year program (Associate's Degree) that provides credit towards a degree, or;
 - b. Provides not less than one year of training towards gainful employment, or;
 - c. Provides training for gainful employment through a vocational program that has been in existence for at least two years.
2. In good standing with the college, university or vocational training school;
3. Maintaining a grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. If grade point average is below a 2.0, the youth has one semester to reestablish a 2.0 grade point average;
4. Making progress towards completing the programs they are enrolled in;
5. Priority will be given to full time students in the event of ETV funding being depleted during the federal fiscal year.

A Worker who receives an ETV request from a Youth out of care and eligible for the ETV program shall complete a Case Management service  in MACWIS, requesting the appropriate support service for the ETV voucher. This request can be entered from any county location, regardless of the originating COR.

ETV APPROVAL PROCESS:

1. Independent Living (IL) Specialists (Contractor) will assist in identifying eligible youth;
2. The IL Specialists (Contractor) coordinates financial aid application/packet with youth (FASFA, MTAG, Institution);
⇒ The youth must first apply for, and have received confirmation and/or

disapproval notices from applications made for the Pell Grant, MTAG, scholarships, or other grants the youth may have applied for. The IL Specialist must also factor in the sources and amounts of any other funds that may be available to the youth.

3. The IL Specialists (Contractor) coordinates ETV application with youth and sends application to the COR Social Worker and ASWS for signature;
4. The IL Specialists sends ETV application to State Independent Living Coordinator for review;
5. The State Independent Living Coordinator sends the ETV notification to the agency's Administration Unit Director to ensure the COR has ample State Funds in (MACWIS) for the county to select an Education and Training Voucher Support Service;
6. The State Independent Living Coordinator notifies by phone or e-mail, the COR Worker to expedite entering the ETV support service request ☐ in MACWIS by selecting the Education and Training Voucher Support Service;
7. The COR Worker enters the ETV request ☐ in MACWIS;
8. A tickler (electronic notification) is received by the COR Supervisor to review/approve the ETV request ☐ in MACWIS;
9. A tickler (electronic notification) is sent to the State IL Coordinator;
10. The State Independent Living Coordinator reviews/approves the ETV request ☐ in MACWIS;
11. The ETV tickler (electronic notification) goes to the COR bookkeeper to be expedited;
12. The COR bookkeeper prepares payment for the approved ETV Support Service provider (vendor or youth). A re-imbursement payment may be issued to an individual/party including the youth in the event a purchase was made and proof of payment was rendered. An itemized receipt must be given to the COR bookkeeper before a check can be issued

An initial ETV application must be submitted in writing to enroll the youth into the ETV Program prior to their 21st birthday. Renewal applications may be submitted on or after October 1 of each subsequent year until their 23rd birthday.

COST OF ATTENDANCE

"Cost of Attendance" is defined under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and includes tuition, fees, equipment, materials, computers, housing, internships, school-related travel, transportation needs, childcare, room and board, healthcare, student loans, and re-imbursement of educational needs to the applicant. If expenses related to the student's personal vehicle are not a part of the cost of attendance, they are not allowable expenses under the voucher program. For the purpose of this title, the term "cost of attendance" means:

1. tuition and fees normally assessed a student carrying the same academic workload as determined by the institution, and including costs for rental or purchase of any equipment, materials, or supplies required of all students in the same course of study;

2. an allowance for books, supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous personal expenses, including a reasonable allowance for the documented rental and purchase of a personal computer for a student attending the institution on at least a half-time basis as determined by institution;
3. an allowance (as determined by the institution) for room and board costs incurred by the student;
 - a. shall be an allowance determined by the institution for a student without dependents residing at home with parents;
 - b. shall be a standard allowance (determined by the institution) for students without dependents residing in institutionally owned or operated housing based on the amount normally assessed most of its residents for room and board; and
 - c. shall be an allowance for all other students based on the expenses reasonably incurred by such students for room and board;
4. tuition and fees and an allowance for less than half-time students (as determined by the institution) for only books, supplies and transportation (as determined by the institution) and dependent care expenses;
5. tuition and fees, only, for students engaged in a program of study by correspondence and if required, books and supplies, travel, and room and board costs incurred specifically in fulfilling a required period of residential training;
6. tuition and fees, only, for incarcerated students and, if required, books and supplies;
7. reasonable costs for a student enrolled in an academic program in a program of study abroad approved for credit by the student's home institution;
8. an allowance for a student with one or more dependents, based on the estimated actual expenses incurred for such dependent care and based on the number and age of such dependents;
9. an allowance (as determined by the institution) for a student with a disability and those expenses related to the student's disability, including special services, personal assistance, transportation, equipment, and supplies that are reasonably incurred and not provided for by other assisting agencies;
10. a student receiving all or part of the student's instruction by means of telecommunications technology; no distinction shall be made with respect to the mode of instruction in determining costs;
11. a student engaged in a work experience under a cooperative education program, an allowance for reasonable costs associated with such employment (as determined by the institution);
12. a student who receives a loan under this or any other Federal law, or, at the option of the institution, a conventional student loan incurred by the student to cover a student's cost of attendance at the institution, an allowance for the actual cost of any loan fee, originated fee, or insurance premium charged to such student or such parent on such loan, or the average cost of any such fee or premium charged by the Secretary, lender, or guaranty agency making or insuring such loan, as the case may be.

INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

As defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965, Sections 102 and 472, an *“institution of higher education”*:

1. Awards a Bachelor's Degree or is not less than a two-year program (Associate's Degree) that provides credit towards a degree, or
2. Provides not less than one year of training towards gainful employment, or
3. Provides training for gainful employment through a vocational program that has been in existence for at least two years,
4. Admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or equivalent; or admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance.
5. Is a public, private, or non-profit institution.
6. Is accredited or pre-accredited and is authorized to operate in that state.


K. PERSONAL DOCUMENTS TO BE GIVEN TO A YOUTH UPON DISCHARGE FROM CUSTODY

Youth are released from the agency's custody due to various reasons, including but not limited to the fact youth has reached his/her majority age. Whatever the reason for leaving custody, the Worker shall ensure that the youth receives, at no cost, his/her original:

1. Birth certificate
2. Social Security card


Other documents supplied, at no cost, to the youth upon discharge from custody include:

1. Educational documents
2. Medical history/information
3. Any life books compiled during youths stay in custody
4. Copy of any court orders
5. Photographs

On the narrative screen  in MACWIS, the Worker shall list all documents given to the youth upon discharge from custody.


L. CUSTODY BEYOND AGE 20

Under jurisdiction by the Youth Court, the agency's custody of a youth ends at age 20. If the COR can document unmitigated circumstances that constitute the need to continue custody past age 20, the COR may petition the Chancery Court for continued custody. This petition must be filed prior to the youth's 20th birthday.

MACWIS  will send the COR Worker a tickler 60 days prior to the youth's 20th birthday alerting the Worker of pending legal action.

M. AFTERCARE SERVICES

Special financial assistance will be provided for youth ages 18 until their 21st birthday who left custody on or after attaining age 18. These services are available to youth in crisis who need additional temporary assistance to continue in the process of transitioning towards self-sufficiency. The benefits can be distributed quarterly as long as youth remains in crisis.

Aftercare Services may include rent deposits, rent, utility deposits, utility payments, food and household supplies, and child care. Payment must be made to the vendor(s) and receipts kept in the county file. These services are available to the youth in the county where the youth currently resides as long as that county Worker secures documentation or a statement from the youth/chancery court that youth has been released from agency's custody. The county of residence social worker must assess the youth's needs before creating a plan of action with the youth. The Worker must complete a Case Management service  in MACWIS. All requests for funds will be reviewed and considered for approval on a case-by-case basis by the Independent Living State Coordinator.

N. AFTERCARE MEDICAID

Youth in care who leave the agency's custody on or after their 18th birthday but who have not reached their 21st birthday are eligible for Medicaid coverage through the month they turn 21 without regard to income or resources. The COR Worker shall send an end date on foster care services for these youth to the Division of Medicaid, who will issue a letter to the youth specifying continued coverage.

Foster youth who are receiving Medicaid or benefits under other categories such as SSI, TANF, Economic Assistance, CHIPS, or Regional Medicaid will not be in the category for automatic continuing Medicaid Coverage up to age 21. The individual programs will determine eligibility for continued coverage.